

Sage Publications

Writing a Book Proposal

Thank you for considering writing for Sage Publications. What follows is a brief description of what Commissioning Editors might expect to see included in a successful book proposal.

Sage publishes a variety of different types of books for different markets, including student textbooks, supplementary texts, handbooks, study guides, and monographs. We would appreciate it if you could use the questions below to structure your proposal, whatever the type of book you wish to write.

However, because this is a generic set of guidelines, not all of the questions set out below will be relevant to your proposal. In many instances authors will not feel able to provide information on all of the questions. We would like to stress however that the more information that you, the author, can provide at the proposal stage, the more likely it is that your proposal will satisfy our commissioning criteria.

Please do not hesitate to email or phone if you have any questions about drawing up your proposal.

Where to send your proposal and how to get in touch

Please send your proposal to **Patrick Brindle**:

Sage Publications,
1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London, EC1Y 1SP.
Tel. +44 (0)207 324 8676

Email: patrick.brindle@sagepub.co.uk

We would prefer to receive your proposal, if possible, by email attachment.

A few tips before you start

Remember, your proposal has three main audiences, and you should be cognisant of this when writing your proposal: 1) The commissioning editor, 2) academic reviewers inside the discipline, 3) the Sage publishing committee. The commissioning editor will be looking for a clear rationale of how your proposal will fit with the market and how it will compare to similar books in existence. Peer reviewers will be looking for enough information to make them feel that their review is worthwhile and interesting (so a review that is very short and low on detail is likely to annoy reviewers). Reviewers will want some academic or pedagogical character so that they can get a feel for the book and for your voice as an author or editor. The Sage publishing

committee are subject experts, so will be looking for clear explanations of what you're trying to do and why in layman's terms.

These guidelines are structured like a questionnaire, and the best advice is to follow them as closely as possible. However, for the purposes of easy reviewing, once you have completed the proposal document, it is advisable that you go back and delete Sage's questions and leave only your responses.

We have included other tips in blue throughout the document. We hope you find them useful.

1. Proposed Title and Author Name

Suggest a title that you think best reflects the content and indicate this clearly at the top of your proposal document, the approach or the aim of the text in relation to the target reader.

Please also remember to clearly place your name and a full list of other author/editor names on the top of your proposal document and please also date the proposal (its amazing how many proposals we get without a name or a date attached).

2. Type of book

Please tell us whether your proposal is

- a) a core textbook (aimed at 1st year or 2nd year undergraduates)
- b) a modular textbook (aimed at serving a commonly taught undergraduate or postgraduate taught modules)
- c) a supplementary book (aimed at less commonly taught higher level courses and interested researchers)
- d) a monograph (based on original research and likely to be of interest only to fellow researchers in the field)
- e) another type of publication (e.g. a handbook, a kit, a reader etc)

Please note that if you are proposing a textbook, chapter numbers should largely be dictated by the typical length of course for which your book is intended. For instance, if you are proposing, say, a modular textbook for what is typically a one semester course, then your contents should list about 12 chapters (minimum 10) to match course length. A book for what is normally a two-semester course should include a minimum of 20 chapters.

3. A Synopsis of the book (500 – 1000 words in length)

- a) Topic: the subject of the book, courses the title is intended for and the level
- b) The aim of the Book: what does it propose to do? Why do you see a need for this book? How will the book achieve its aim?
- c) Scope: the content of the book – what is included/excluded and why? Price: what would you consider to be the best competitive price for the text?
- d) Length: what do you anticipate to be the eventual length of your proposed book in number of words and pages (roughly 420 words = 1 page)?

4. Table of Contents x 2

Please provide a short table of contents AND an annotated table of contents (ToC). The short ToC, should list only chapter numbers, chapter titles and (where appropriate) chapter authors. You should also enclose a longer annotated ToC that provides roughly a paragraph's synopsis of the likely contents of the chapter. This should set out the chapter/ book structure clearly, the

extent of topics to be covered and give a summary (approx. 100-150 words per chapter) of the main issues to be found in each chapter.

Please note, it is most advisable to give chapters very descriptive titles rather than opt for 'sexier' or more imaginative titles. Most book-buyers look at tables of contents when deciding whether to buy a book, and they need to be told what the contents are by the chapter titles rather than have to flick through the book itself. (For example, 'Ch1: Setting up an Interview', 'Ch2: Interview Questions' are blander but much better chapter titles than more poetic but less descriptive 'Ch1: Spaces' and 'Ch2: Voices').

5. Special Textbook Features (for textbooks only)

Market research demonstrates that textbooks, even high level textbooks, are increasingly dependent on 'pedagogical features' if they are to be bought by students or recommended by lecturers. Please indicate whether your text will include such 'pedagogical features' as end-of-chapter questions; boxed summaries; diagrams; annotated bibliographies; student exercises; illustrations; a glossary; lists of chapter objectives; checklists; links to original case materials and sources of further reading; other etc etc?

6. Supplementary Features (for textbooks only)

Can you suggest any useful supplementary features that could be provided with your book for the benefit of students and/or lecturers (such as a companion web-site, student workbook, instructors' manual etc.) or do you feel that such features would be inappropriate to your book?

7. Case Study material (for textbooks only)

If proposing a textbook, please indicate your plans for inclusion of case-study and exemplary material in the text you plan to integrate with the text (e.g. will case studies be short / frequent / extended / boxed from the text / embedded in the text etc.)

8. The Market (please answer as many of these questions as you can)

- a) Who is the ideal-typical reader of your book?
- b) On what courses do you anticipate your book being used?
- c) Are such courses core/compulsory/optional etc?
- d) What is the typical length of such courses (e.g. one semester or two?)
- e) Indicate how you view the condition of the target marketplace at present and any changes you foresee in the near future.
- f) How quickly is the book likely to date?
- g) What is the scope of the market in terms of a rough indication of student numbers? UK universities only? USA? Europe? Global?
- h) Identify the primary market (if possible give a rough indication of student numbers)
- i) Identify the secondary market
- j) Identify where any other interest may come from, e.g. practitioners, general interest etc
- k) Please identify the centres of teaching and research excellence for the area(s) covered by your proposal

9. **Please set out a summary of who will buy the book and why** (please note that many more books are read than are bought, so we need to get a sense of who will actually spend, say, £15 to £25 on your proposed book and for what purpose, rather than simply be an interested reader of your book on library loan (ie the typical reason for choosing to purchase might be lecturer-recommendation, library purchase, academic interest, compulsory course purchase))

10. Competing Titles

- a) Please name what you regard to be the main two or three competitor texts available on the market (even if there is no direct competitor, please indicate to us the nearest book in the market to yours, as this will give marketing a chance to assess the size of the market)
- b) For each competitor title, please provide as many of the following details as possible: Author name; Title; Publisher; Publication date; Extent; Price; Estimated market share; Strengths; Weaknesses.
- c) State how your title will differ from the competing texts. What do you consider to be the advantages/disadvantages of your text over these? What will set your book apart from the competitor titles? e.g.: a different/original approach, the organisation of the text, the scope of coverage?
- d) Are you aware of any potential competitor titles that will be published at or around the same time as your text?

11. Your Writing Plan

- a) What do you perceive to be your expected writing schedule and provisional delivery date for the final manuscript? (NB: The best months for delivery of a text ms are February and June)
- b) How long in words and pages do you expect the book to be (e.g. 425 words per page is rough average)

12. Your CV

Please enclose a copy of your CV. In your CV you should include the following details for all of the authors involved in the proposed text: Your full name; Contact details (address, telephone/fax number, email); Date of birth; Qualifications; Present Appointments; Career to date; Publications to date.

Please note, we do not have time to read long CVs (some of the CVs we get sent are six or seven pages long or even longer) so try to limit your CV to one A4 side only, detailing your contact details and your main (not all) publications.

13. Reviewers

If we like your proposal we will, as an academic publisher, look to get your proposal reviewed. Please list any must-have or must-avoid reviewers that you would like, ideally, to see as reviewers for your book.

14. Helping us at Sage

At Sage Publications we are always trying to publish the best books for academics and students, so I would be grateful if you could let us know if there are gaps in our Research Methods and Study Skills publishing that you feel need plugging. We have a comprehensive list, but it is always good to know where the remaining gaps are.

Many thanks.